



Case Study:
**Maputo Plan of Action (MPoA) Advocating for Sexual
 and Reproductive Health and Rights in Tanzania**
Best Practice Case Study
 By Gladness Munuo

Introduction

Gender and Media Southern Africa Tanzania (GEMSAT) is an organisation with individual and institutional membership. Most of the GEMSAT activities focus on awareness and advocacy issues concerning gender such as education, health, economics, social, etc. Every theme is examined through a gender lens. GEMSAT is a chapter organisation of individuals and institutions that work to promote gender equality in and through the media in the South African Development Community (SADC) countries. Its mission is to promote the mainstreaming of gender in Southern Africa media as integral to the advocacy for freedom of expression, a free and independent media and for the development of democratic societies in the region.

After the adoption of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development on 17 August 2008, GEMSAT conducted a review in Tanzania, and found that there were gaps that needed special attention in order to fulfill the mission and vision of the Gender Protocol. One of these gaps is the problem of Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) for the majority women in Southern Africa, particularly in Tanzania. GEMSAT, as a civil society organisation (CSO) that works with journalists and other gender activists, found that there was a need to implement this project in order to reduce health problems in women and sensitise the government through the Ministry for Health and Social Affairs.

Background

The Maputo Plan of Action (MPoA) is a framework for implementing the African Union's Continental Policy Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. MPoA was approved by the Ministries of Health of African Union member states in Maputo, Mozambique in September 2006. The MPoA states that African leaders have a civic responsibility to respond to the sexual and reproductive health needs and rights of their people. The Maputo Plan of Action was intended to be a demonstration of their commitment; however, three years after being signed it is not clear how the provisions of the plan have been implemented at the regional and national level.

Girls and women continue to lack control over matters related to their sexuality and sexual health and rights. Sexual and reproductive ill health accounts for almost one third of the global burden of disease among women of reproductive age. Sexual and reproductive health information, education and services should be widely available and affordable for all. Yet too often they remain inaccessible.

As a result, the risk of maternal mortality in Africa remains the highest of all continents. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest infant mortality rate and, at the same time, accounts for half of the developing world's maternal deaths (one in every 100 births). It also has the lowest rate of contraceptive use in the world (19%). 4.2 million unsafe abortions occur in

Africa every year, causing 30% of all maternal deaths in the continent, and taking 90 women's lives every day. Finally, the HIV epidemic has expanded at a pace that has outstripped efforts to bring services to scale. In 2007, the number of new HIV infections was 2.5 times higher than the increase in the number of people receiving antiretroviral drugs.

Despite the emphasis on integrating HIV with sexual and reproductive health issues, current HIV policies in many countries do not explicitly state the importance of reproductive rights and neither do they provide guidance on how to mainstream sexual and reproductive rights into existing reproductive and HIV programmes. The linkages between HIV policies and programmes and SRHR policies and services need to be reaffirmed. There is an urgent need for political and civil society leaders to be informed about the provisions of the Maputo Plan of Action, and develop strategies to accelerate its implementation.

What is SRHR?

SRHR is the right for all people regardless of age, gender and other characteristics to make informed choices regarding their own sexuality and reproduction, provided that they respect the rights of others. It includes the right of access to information and services to support these choices and promote sexual and reproductive health.

Reproductive Health

Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of diseases or infirmity in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and process.

Objectives

The overall objectives of the initiative were to:

- raise awareness on the MPoA and related policy

instruments such as the SADC Gender and Development Protocol amongst health reporters;

- create a pool of journalists that will track the implementation of the MPoA in Tanzania; and
- increase media coverage on SRHR and how government, the private sector and civil society are implementing the MPoA in Tanzania.

Main activities

GEMSAT works to empower journalists and create awareness among Tanzanian communities on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Journalists will be able to write in detail about all health and reproductive health issues; in addition, GEMSAT will develop a group of journalists (pool) that are



Reproductive health is the right of all women, Neema Mbuya at Business Unusual workshop in Tanzania

Photo: Gender Links



Reproductive health services vital for women

Photo: Gladness Munuo

knowledgeable and able to write on issues about the MPoA so that the targeted readers will be well informed with SRHR information. At present, many journalists write general information about health issues or reproductive issues without relating their information to available policies within the country. This session will enable them to be well equipped with MPoA information.

Violence against women and girls continues to be a serious issue in Tanzania, with devastating consequences that contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS, unplanned pregnancies for school children and sexually transmitted infections. These also contribute to increased maternal mortality and death of children under five years old.

Therefore, during the project, the number of published gender sensitive articles concerning MPoA will be monitored through the collection of published clippings from the newspapers. During the nine-month project extension, it is anticipated that GEMSAT will make a detailed

and researched feature (Special Issue) of articles in the newsletter.

Indicators

The following indicators of success have been identified.

- a) Data obtained by the trained journalists who will investigate a number of issues concerning SRHR under the MPoA, according to the MPoA work plan;
- b) Number of articles published and programmes aired through community television and radio;
- c) Number of media houses that join GEMSAT on campaigning about the MPoA;
- d) Number of stakeholders, including the Medical Women's Association of Tanzania (MEWATA), Association for Reproductive Health (UMATI), AMREF, etc., that give support to GEMSAT on the MPoA campaign; and
- e) Demonstrated positive responses from the government on the MPoA campaign.

Project Outputs

Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) will mobilise health reporters using existing channels and networks. A one-day workshop will be conducted with key health reporters to discuss the key provisions of the MPoA. In the meeting journalists will be asked to identify SRHR issues covered in the MPoA that still need to be addressed in Tanzania. The issues will be prioritised and strategies for addressing them through the media will be shared. In the one-day workshop journalists will be mobilised to form a loose coalition that will spearhead advocacy on the MPoA. Terms of reference for the group will be discussed and agreed upon.

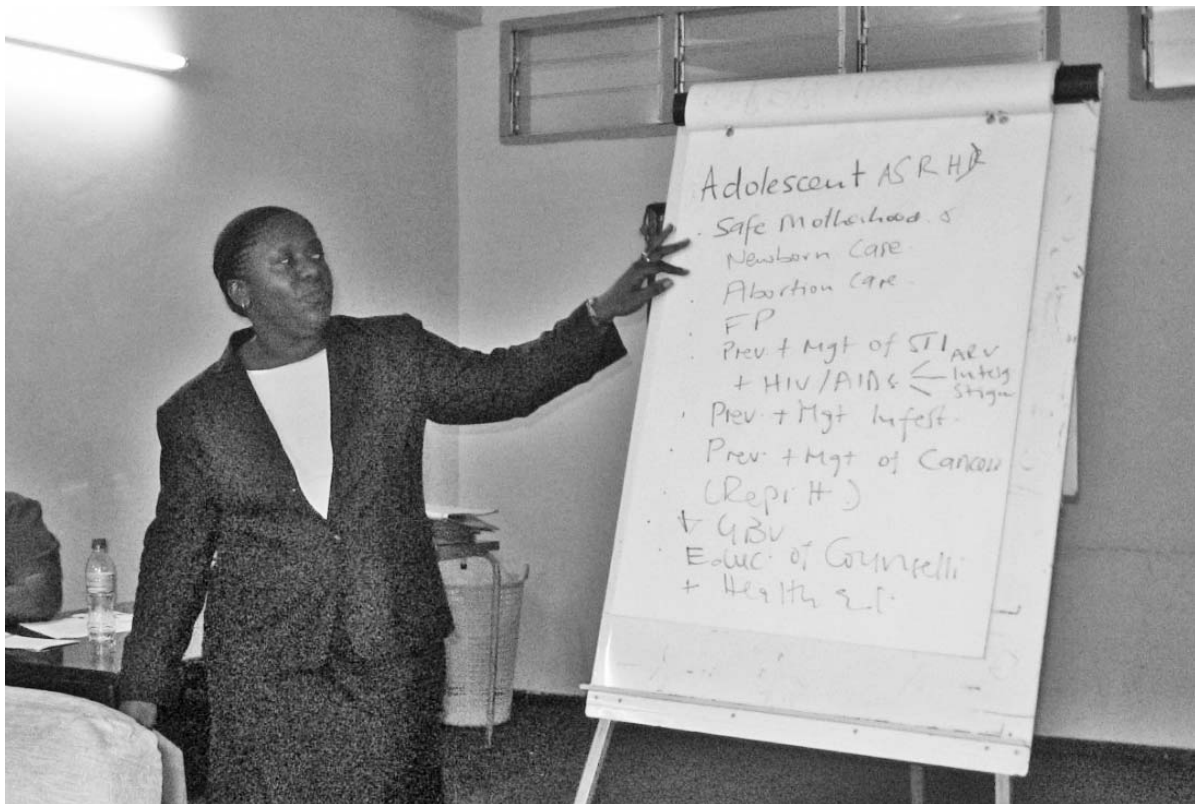
The network of journalists trained on the MPoA will be encouraged to write SRHR related stories and share those that are published with GEMSAT and other journalists in the network. GEMSAT will keep all news clippings that appear in the newspapers as a way to monitor the coverage of SRHR issues in the

media about how the MPoA is being implemented in Tanzania. The stories will be shared with other civil society partners working in SRHR as a way of raising issues that should be targeted for advocacy. Tanzania is a signatory to both the MPoA and the SADC Gender and Development Protocol; therefore, GEMSA will mobilise journalists to raise the profile of common SRHR issues covered in both commitments and increase advocacy on such issues.

Project Outcomes

The project has the following expected outcomes.

1. Improved awareness of the MPoA amongst the group of reporters. A group of print and electronic media journalists will benefit from this knowledge where they will be able to transfer the collected information to the community who are the main target;
2. Increased articles on the MPoA and SRHR issues



Dr. Sarah Maongezi briefs GEMSAT journalists on Maputo Plan of action

Photo: Gladness Munuo

affecting women, girls and young people. Several feature and news articles will be published in daily and weekly papers including the Parapanda Newsletter for grassroots people to increase their awareness;

3. Increased media coverage and reporting on SRHR issues. Community radio and television stations will air documentary programmes regarding findings obtained by individual journalists concerning the SRHR study; and
4. Improved SRHR related services to communities through media advocacy. A number of policies and guidelines for health workers and other health providers will be developed and implemented.

Challenges and way forward

Challenges are as follows:

- lack of sufficient funds to increase the awareness of journalists on MPoA issues;
- NGOs working seriously on the MPoA so far are reluctant to assist on issues when they approached; and
- many more people require information to increase their awareness about SRHR.

The way forward

In terms of MPoA future activities, GEMSAT would like to conduct a thorough research/-survey to crosscheck what has been done by Tanzania from 2007 to date and at what level. Next the findings of the research will be published in our newspapers and be aired on television and radio including community radio stations.

A network committee will be formulated during the 16 Days of Activism. The committee's main duty will be to collaborate and monitor government effort on accelerating the MPoA within Tanzania. Further, findings will be used as case studies and be presented during the meeting with other stakeholders and government representatives from the health sector.

Conclusion

Through this project, GEMSAT together with other stakeholders will examine more closely how well Tanzania as a country is doing to address issues of SRHR in a comprehensive manner as outlined in the Maputo Plan of Action, to which Tanzania is a signatory.

Through media advocacy, it is our great hope that the Government of Tanzania may act by increasing health equipment for labour and maternity wards/hospitals and ensuring that trained staff, including clinical officers and qualified nurses, will be paid better salaries to increase their motivation.

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● Writers Bio
Gladness Munuo is
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